

Victoria Street Newz

March 2010

Volume 6,
Number 12



"All the news that fits,
we print"

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"Happy Newz" ??

by cyann ray

It's been said that "good" news doesn't sell newspapers. Years ago a fellow told me point blank that he found our paper depressing. I completely understood and even sympathized with him a little. But I also told him about the other side of these pages, about the inside of these stories. I told him how everyone involved with this paper was better off somehow because of their involvement and inclusion with the *Victoria Street Newz* family.

In last month's "just another rant" editorial by coordinator Janine Bandcroft, concerns regarding our apparent lack of "happy" news were effectively explained. As was our commitment to write articles and share stories that uncover our truths, often unspoken and unheard truths. The mandate of independent media is to discuss material and share experiences that mainstream coverage is inclined to gloss over. Corporate media sources are not and can not be truly objective. We, on the other hand, have both the freedom and the inclination to report the realities we know.

Admittedly, I'm more of a blues soul than a Pollyanna type tending to focus on what's wrong rather than the positive. And over the years, my articles have certainly reflected this. Even the piece I wrote on happiness (Happy Go Lucky - Sept./06) was void of light or hope. But I assure you all that these writings of mine, regardless of their melancholy tones, do fill me with purpose, satisfaction and an overall improved sense of being. Each piece completed for publication is "good news" to me.

continued on page 3



A Food Not Bombs feast, served after VANOC was ceremoniously evicted from their offices at Kuo-Sing-El-As (Bastion Square). Story page four.

Food Not Bombs offers vegetarian food Sundays on Pandora @ 3 ish.

About Street Newz

"BUILDING BRIDGES IN THE COMMUNITY"

Coordinator: Janine Bandcroft
Distribution Coordinator: John Chomyn
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Advisory Committee: Brian Mason,
Colin Dower, C'Daoim, Chris Cook,
Robin Hitt, James Rowe, Kim Fagerlund.

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Victoria Street Newz welcomes
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personal stories, interviews,
event reviews, cartoons, poetry,
photographs, or artwork, but we
can't guarantee everything will
be published. We reserve the
right to edit, and will not print
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or homophobic. Letters sent to
the editor are assumed to be for
publication, must include phone
number or email (if possible, for
confirmation) and may be edited
for length. You can publish using a
pseudonym, or anonymously.

We are devoted to a triple bottom
line philosophy - concerned about
our environmental and social, as
well as financial, well-being.

You can contribute to social change
by supporting the Victoria Street
Newz team, by pondering the root
causes of poverty, and by working
for peaceful, non-violent change.

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Victoria Street Newz is printed on 100%
pc recycled paper with vegetable ink, at
Horizon Publications -
www.horizonpublications.ca,
604-254-8840.



Victoria Street Newz
is a member of the
North American
Street Newspaper
Association
(nasna.org)
and the
International
Network of
Street Papers
(street-papers.org).

**Submissions (due by the 1st
Friday for the next month's issue),
letters, or donations can be
mailed or delivered to our
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**Street Newz archives, and more
information about us, can be
found at**

relativenewz.ca



i believe ... we live on stolen native land

Capitalist economics and all its manifestations (including the Olympic Games) uphold the significance of individual achievement. I'm not about to suggest that individual achievement isn't a good thing, but I think it's worth some contemplative pondering. As Henry David Thoreau once wrote "the unexamined life is not worth living."

So here's some of what I've learned from my life. When we're children we're taught that sharing our toys is good, stealing and hoarding is bad. We're encouraged to play cooperatively, gently, and to remember that it doesn't matter whether we win or lose. What's important is how we play the game.

If we attempt to live by these standards as adults we're called all sorts of names – socialist, idealist, crazy nutbar. No wonder there's so much teenage angst! As we mature we're forced to try and adapt to a world with the exact opposite values we were taught to embrace as children. Sharing and caring give way to hoarding and manipulating. The needs of the collective are silenced and dismissed in favour of games for a few. Peasants labour in the fields while their overlords languish in the mansions. Six billion is stolen from the public purse and transformed into individual gold, silver, and bronze. Some try to shift the dialogue, to suggest there must be a way to celebrate the victories of a few without trampling on the rights of the many. They are dismissed as unpatriotic nay-sayers, their voices silenced.

There are those who believe that hierarchy is a natural state. These might suggest that the chosen ones are determined by their ability to "work" and fit in, or by their gender and ethnicity. They defend the status quo because it works for them. They're comfortable. They accept that some are meant to serve, and others to receive. They criticize those who are unable to succeed as they did. Ironically they worship at the alter of individuality without considering the challenges, the barriers facing individuals who cannot, for physical or philosophical reasons, do the "work" that keeps the capitalist wheels in gear, the peasants in the fields and the overlords in their mansions. How many are aware that capitalism works best when a percentage of the population remains unemployed? Why must we continue to worship capitalism as if it was divinely inspired?

Since the revolution that overthrew the gambling and prostitution empire of US backed Fulgencia Batista fifty years ago, the Cubans have been doing something other than capitalism. They are inspired by many great intellectuals, including Che Guevara who considered the individual an "actor in this strange and moving drama of the building of socialism, in a dual existence as a unique being and as a member of society (Che Guevara Reader, pg 216)."

We are all individuals but, whether we like it or not, humans are fundamentally social beings with a natural inclination for group behaviour. Together we build libraries, post offices, barns, firehalls, hospitals, schools, transportation systems,

OPINION

Legal brothels? Here? In BC? Well, Jody Patersen, Victoria Times-Colonist columnist thinks so (Comox Valley Echo Extra 1/29/10). And along with documentary filmmaker April Butler-Parry, she is urging citizens to consider the message of legalizing or decriminalizing prostitution. And they certainly have their supporters in Vancouver including the Civil Liberties Association. Patersen points out that escort agencies do sex work under a different name so why not just be up front about prostitution? After all, prostitution only affects consenting adults.

I submit, as mother and grandmother of young women, that all women, young and old, and even girls not yet born, are all affected by the fact of prostitution. Because it is always there, waiting for mothers who can't make their pathetic welfare checks stretch far enough, waiting for naïve young girls with brutal home lives, waiting for poverty stricken women from foreign countries, along with women deliberately addicted to drugs by pimps and can't cut loose. The fact of prostitution is awaiting all women when they look at empty cupboards. Some also hear hungry, crying, ill kept children when they come to a bitter truth...their romantic dreams of being cherished and respected by a particular man (most will have been deserted by their particular men) were lying dreams. The same male culture of the church, the media, the military, the corporations, books, music, movies, videos...all sing love songs touting male cultural devotion to women but then when cupboards are bare and children hungry and dreams smashed a different tune emerges...the same male culture dangles an alternative to women and children's utter destitution...which is prostitution. But what about free choice, the brothel advocates ask. Shouldn't women have free choice in the matter if they want to be sex workers?

No. Because it's not a free choice. It's a false choice. And

ALL Good Newz, All The Time

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labour unions. Unfortunately, from within hierarchical social order, individual achievement often occurs at the expense of the collective.

Personally, I sleep best when I've made a conscious effort to balance my personal needs with consideration for a healthy community.

But life does like to throw us curve balls!

Ten years ago I became vegan - a fantastic personal choice, and with ultimate consideration for my animal friends and the earth overall. I transformed my diet (and have never been healthier), and dispensed with all my leather items. I confess that I continue to wear wool socks, and a beautiful Cowichan sweater (neither of which are new, or purchased by me), but aside from that I'm annoyingly insistent on living simply so others can simply live.

Then one day recently David, from the Solstice Café, showed me beautiful and locally made handmade hats adorned with the Solstice logo, and told me that \$5 from each sale would be donated to the *Street Newz*. Even as I write this I feel pangs of guilt because they're made with wool. Ethically derived wool, I'm assured, but wool nonetheless.

Money, as it's defined in the capitalist model, often encourages people to do things outside their comfort zone. There are many things I would never do, but the reality is *Street Newz* is currently running on fumes. Our last grant was received over a year ago, approved prior to the great capitalist economic meltdown. Grant funding is difficult to find at the best of times, particularly for non-profit organizations who choose to retain their ability to speak their minds rather than surrender to Canada's Charitable status laws (which denounce advocacy). It's even more difficult now that all the public coffers have been gutted to pay for "the games."

So I decided to consider the needs of our collective and accept David's gracious offer. I sincerely thank him for thinking of us, and hope that the creatures who lost their wool did not suffer terribly and were, ideally, relieved from excessive heat with a painless summer haircut. They're beautiful hats ... please consider supporting the local economy and local independent media. (See pg 11).

Legal Brothels?

by Betty Krawczyk

women who understand the dynamics of prostitution should stop giving lip service to this concept in order to please other men. Most of the time females are pushed into prostitution and this is problematical on many fronts, including simply physical health. Even when the utmost precautions are taken there is always a certain amount of body fluids exchanged during sex consisting of semen, saliva, perspiration, blood, and even minute traces of urine and feces during intercourse, or other sex acts. Even if sex workers escape disease and the ever present threat of violence from sadistic customers, they run the increased risk of severe gynecological problems as they age.

Women are not physically constructed for daily, repeated, numerous sex acts with strange men and this sexual degrading of women, of any woman, degrades our entire society. My daughter, in her work for Save the Children authored a government report (Sacred Lives) on the age of females entering prostitution. The average age was fourteen. And one sees these children on the kiddie strolls in Vancouver as well as any major city. In my opinion women should be coming together to abolish poverty, not legalize it in its most visible, degraded form, which is prostitution. But how do we abolish poverty? Well, maybe we need a women's revolution, not a women's cheering section for meeting men's increasingly hyped sexual needs. Revolution is past due.

Betty Shiver Krawczyk (born August 1928) is a Louisiana born, BC based environmental activist, author and former political candidate. Read more from Betty at bettysearlyedition.blogspot.com.



Happy Newz --- cont'd from cover

Recently my best friend of 35 yrs. told me his spirit was sullen and he was beginning to wonder about the purpose of our existence. This guy has it made: a secure teaching career, a world traveller, a long-time loving mate, financial stability, vast personal and social interests, a beautiful home, and hasn't gained a pound since we were teens! How dare he complain, I initially thought, and told him he was an over-achieving yuppie, forever trying to grasp that golden ring of capitalism and keep up with the Jones's. (Best friends don't mince words!). I suggested he lower his standards and regroup. Rethink his priorities. Focus on what truly brings him joy. By offering my friend these tips, I inadvertently shone a much needed light on my own state of being. And maybe our readers (and writers) can benefit from this fresh perspective as well.

I live 10 minutes from the ocean with our glorious left coast mountain range greeting me most mornings with their snow-capped magnificence. Eagles, otters, rainbows, herons, peacocks and seals often share this coastline landscape. Despite chronic pain and physical limitations, I am still able to ride my bike everywhere I need to go. Cycling thru what forested areas remain, smells and feels great and fills me with joy and hope. And though my Dad may be slipping away (along with most of his memories) in a bare-bones nursing home, I am still able to visit daily and see the joy my dog and I bring him. That, to me, is "good news."

And while bad drivers, leash laws, pain, poverty, prohibition, corporate and political corruption, destruction of our social services and natural world can effortless consume me and fuel my writings, I know things could be much worse and that fact keeps me going.

Many folks live grander lives than mine and require much more than a passing rainbow or eagle sighting to make them happy. Fair enough. Happiness is subjective. But I firmly believe that simple pleasures are the best. These bleak economic times seem hardest felt by those who had stuff to lose. The poor have already downsized and lowered their expectations in order to survive.

I'd like to believe that we can all carve out some pleasantries for ourselves, some reason to get up each morning and face the new day with hope and a smile. But we cannot deny the disturbing reality that plagues far too many here in our "fair" Garden City and globally. We cannot breeze over their existence, for they represent the common denominator of the human species. They humble us. They teach us that less is more. That corporate and capitalist values are ultimately exploitative, destructive and dehumanizing.

There is nothing inherently good or bad about news, it's just information. There is another saying about news: that no news is good news. This suggests that only bad news is worth reporting and that silence (lack of coverage) indicates that all is well. But all isn't well and those of us armed with pens and opinions want to share these concerns.

I'm grateful for *Victoria Street Newz* giving me this opportunity to write. And I apologize to any readers who are upset with our content. I too have been bothered by what I've read, but I am far more outraged at mainstream medias' attention to tripe topics and their passing concerns for what really matters.

As Janine pointed out, we'd welcome any "happy news" submissions. It would seem, however, that most of our regular contributors (and those inclined to write in) remain focused on issues of a serious nature. Issues that need to be shared and discussed. And we should all be happy about that.

What Pets Write in their Diaries

(this seems to have been written anonymously,
thanks to my friend Robin for sending it ...)

Excerpts from a Dog's Diary.....

8:00 am - Dog food! My favorite thing!
9:30 am - A car ride! My favorite thing!
9:40 am - A walk in the park! My favorite thing!
10:30 am - Got rubbed and petted! My favorite thing!
12:00 pm - Lunch! My favorite thing!
1:00 pm - Played in the yard! My favorite thing!
3:00 pm - Wagged my tail! My favorite thing!
5:00 pm - Milk Bones! My favorite thing!
7:00 pm - Got to play ball! My favorite thing!
8:00 pm - Wow! Watched TV with the people! My favorite thing!
11:00 pm - Sleeping on the bed! My favorite thing!



Excerpts from a Cat's Daily Diary.....

Day 983 of my captivity...

My captors continue to taunt me with bizarre little dangling objects.

They dine lavishly on fresh meat, while the other inmates and I are fed hash or some sort of dry nuggets. Although I make my contempt for the rations perfectly clear, I nevertheless must eat something in order to keep up my strength.

The only thing that keeps me going is my dream of escape.

In an attempt to disgust them, I once again vomit on the carpet.

Today I decapitated a mouse and dropped its headless body at their feet. I had hoped this would strike fear into their hearts, since it clearly demonstrates what I am capable of. However, they merely made condescending comments about what a 'good little hunter' I am. Bastards.

There was some sort of assembly of their accomplices tonight. I was placed in solitary confinement for the duration of the event. However, I could hear the noises and smell the food. I overheard that my confinement was due to the power of 'allergies.' I must learn what this means and how to use it to my advantage.

Today I was almost successful in an attempt to assassinate one of my tormentors by weaving around his feet as he was walking. I must try this again tomorrow -- but at the top of the stairs.

I am convinced that the other prisoners here are flunkies and snitches. The dog receives special privileges. He is regularly released - and seems to be more than willing to return. He is obviously retarded.

The bird has got to be an informant. I observe him communicating with the guards regularly. I am certain that he reports my every move. My captors have arranged protective custody for him in an elevated cell, so he is safe. For now.....



Rose's Writings

It is hard for a person like myself to write about a positive story of things that I see and hear; because I see so much.

What I see and hear used to make me wonder about the realm I live in. I was never brought up seeing people without housing, or live without working for my meal, a roof over my head or clothing on my back. Some of my biggest pride are marked with minimal joy. In fact all of them are; because it usually comes at the expense of something.

So if I think of a positive joyous event it would be about surviving my early childhood, my life on the streets and surviving a extremely abusive relationship. I am still holding my own composure learning to keep on smiling and holding my head up and reasonably straight as I brace myself for another day of selling the *Victoria Street Newz*.

For when I am down on the streets is where I really do enjoy myself as I get to meet all sorts of people. You see you have to be a real people lover and highly adaptable to working conditions. Working the streets can be a challenge because asking for donations is hard when you are witnessing a steady flow of people walking by you as if you where are just another statue on the street.

The three positive things I get to experience is I get to be out in the elements rain or sunshine, make my own hours and I get to keep my donations.

There have been a few occasions where I have witnessed drive by drug deals, assaults and love scenes on the streets. Other perks is getting to watch all sorts of artists hard at work and getting to listen for hours on end and watch the seasons changes. There has been one or two occasions where someone has seen my values and have asked me to recommend good dinners and lounges.

Once I helped security to locate a lug who robbed an elder person. I just recently had the experience of being given a lot of hugs and being told I am like an information centre encouraging to buy local think global and support some of the most under privileged. Right after this person told me that they needed my help as there was a young girl gone missing and that they didn't have enough help. So once again I was able to give this unlikely person some helpful information and was given a firm hand shake with a winning smile just before one of victoria's outreach team stopped by to tell me that there were actually two girls gone missing. Once again I was giving them information about the website HomelessNation.org, again I was given a huge smile and and a little change for a copy of the *Street Newz*.

On very rare occasions I have had people just stop by a give me a fin for my time out on the streets. To me being acknowledged with a smile helps me forget about those long hours I am outside just trying make enough to survive on a daily basis on the streets, risking being robbed myself and getting nothing but cold hands and sore feet.

City of Gardens: The Invisible Society



I am writing a ten book series on how mental illness, addiction and homelessness affect Victoria. Most importantly, I document the City's challenges and successes in addressing the situation. None the less, our street community has the upper hand and deserves the right to be heard.

I fund the project itself including editing and publishing as well as donating all 1st year profits to a charity regarding homelessness. (Victoria Human Exchange Society) VHES (www.humanx.org).

This book series is dedicated to you. I put up the bill, and I will print your words, hopefully take a few pictures. This is your opportunity to speak out. I only have 5 interviews with the street community. I would like no less than 15 stories and about 100 pictures. I am not receiving any gain from this project. You may or may not know that the first book is already out.

'The Invisible Society' is your book. It is my gift to you. Not only would I like to do this for you, I would be honoured to be called your friend.

Contact Patrick at 250-415-0118 or pjschnerch@shaw.ca.

REPORT ON THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO REVIEW THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

This committee met in the Douglas Fir Room the day before deadline. Due to the moribund state of politics in "Brazil du Nord," and voter apathy, the committee only heard from submitters during the afternoon. The morning session was cancelled. The committee consisted of seven "lieberals" and five N.D.P.s among whom was the immortal Jenny Kwan. Another member, dare, I say it a "lieberman," Harry Bloy was asking all kinds of pertinent questions, and seemed to have the subject of F.O.I. at heart. Jenny asked lots of good questions too.

Ted Gerk from Kelowna queried why we still can't request information on abortions. Lynn England and Glen Hallworth both had horror stories to tell about V.I.H.A. improperly withholding information. Curled my hair for one!

Keith Reynolds of The Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives and Morgan Blakley of the UVic Environmental Law Society gave superb presentations on the deleterious effects of government departments using loopholes in the act to delay and discourage requests for information. The main points raised by these speakers were:

1. Excessive fees and deposits are being demanded to dissuade F.O.I. requests.
2. Requests are shuffled from ministry to ministry as a delaying tactic.
3. Excessive time is wasted in replying to requests for waiver of fees in matters pertaining to the public's right to know.
4. Groups particularly prone to experience malicious harassment are, you've guessed it, the media, political parties and public interest groups.

The main remedy proposed was to fine any ministry that exceeds the legal time limit and hopefully credit the office of the F.O.I. & Privacy Commissioner to enable it to do a better job.

Elizabeth Thompson was the only person to present on privacy. She wanted to see any government department guilty of a breach of anybody's privacy fined.

As for me I complained about Maximus, reiterated the main points raised by the previous speakers and told the "lieberman" M.L.A.s to raise merry hell in caucus if the committee's recommendations weren't implemented. There was something between a cough and a chuckle from the "lieberman" seats when I reminded them that there is a general perception that the province is run from the premier's office. I even offered to lend them my blacksmith's hammer to pound on the premier's table to make their points in caucus. Let's hope we've started a bustup in the "lieberman" ranks that will cause them to implode!!! *Don Startin*

8th annual Homeless Marathon

The eighth annual Homelessness Marathon will once again serve up 14 hours of people-powered radio, broadcasting this year from many sites across Canada.

With the goal of being a consciousness-raising event, the Marathon will provide an opportunity for homeless people and their allies to take to the airwaves, and allow a nationwide discussion on homelessness issues and possible solutions.

February 23rd
TUNE-IN ALL NIGHT LONG
CALL TOLL-FREE : 1-866-594-7729
from sunset on Tuesday February 23rd until sunrise.
INFO: <http://ckut.ca/homeless.html>
In Victoria, check CFUV for rebroadcast time (likely early March).



Prorogue, What Prorogue?!

In my study of the history of prorogation among our founding peoples, I've found no evidence of it in First Nation's governance. The British have used it from time to time, with mixed results.

When their king prorogued the French Parliament in 1785, the parliamentarians met anyway on a tennis court, the so-called Tennis Court Coup. This led to revolution, deposing of their king and much of their royalty, Napoleon, war, and eventually a loose democracy that has persisted to the present.

Perhaps the Green Party could rent a hockey rink near Ottawa and invite the MPs to attend and begin acting like a government. Even Conservative participants could be accommodated. Twelve seats could be allotted the Greens so they can represent the 940,000 Canadians who voted for them in the last election.

We pointedly would not ask the queen for permission to govern ourselves, even by phone.

Jim Erkiletian, Nanaimo

INSERT BRAIN HERE



woodscartoons.blogspot.com

BY WOODSY

Demonstration and street feast mark opposition to Olympic overspending and escalating poverty

February 6th, 2010 - Coast Salish Territories - Victoria B.C. - The Victoria Coalition Against Poverty (VCAP) and No2010 Victoria organized a loud and colourful rally that wound through downtown Victoria this afternoon. The demonstration began at Bastion Square with a peoples' eviction of the 2010 Winter Games Secretariat office.

"The Secretariat is VANOC's partner and oversees B.C.'s financial commitment to the Games", said organizer Shannon Lucy. "We evicted the Secretariat because we should not be spending billions on the Games in the midst of massive cutbacks to housing, essential services and other basic human needs."

The march continued on to the downtown branch of the Royal Bank of Canada for a "sound-off". "RBC is an Olympic sponsor and major investor in the tar sands", said organizer Mik Turje. "The tar sands have led to pollution and high cancer rates in the Fort Chipewyan First Nation located downstream. We went to let RBC customers know what their bank is really about."

The march stopped at the tragedy-laden corner of Pandora and Quadra to highlight critical poverty rates in Victoria. "The Olympics have cost twice as much as it would take to bring everyone in province above poverty line", said organizer Shane Calder. "It only takes \$2.8 billion to bring everyone in B.C. up to the poverty line, but the Olympics have cost us at least \$6 billion. Unless we get services and supports to the levels we need, we can expect more tragedy on this corner".

The march ended at Centennial Square with a street feast. "This afternoon's rally is an indication that the people of British Columbia will not continue to stand by as the Liberals gut the Province's social services in order to boost corporate profits", stated organizer Tamara Herman. "We'll be in Vancouver next week to make sure our message is heard."

The Victoria Coalition Against Poverty (VCAP) is a coalition of grassroots organizations that together are demanding an immediate end to poverty.

No2010 Victoria is a local collective opposed to the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games.

For info: viccoalitionagainstpoverty@gmail.com and no2010victoria@gmail.com.

Mining Ashtrays

by Tavis W Dodds

Tobacco salvage is a little-known subculture of the smoking poor.

Contrary to what some people might think, butt-picking is not sexual at all. Picking butts is the practice, and perhaps the art, of reclaiming stubbed out cigarette butts for the tobacco in them. Perhaps most people recoil from the thought of butt-picking, even more than people recoil from the act of smoking itself, but for many people around the world and for at least a century, picking butts is an occupation and even a livelihood.

"I get the wet ones," the old native told me through pop bottle glasses, "and I mix them in with the dry ones so it all works out. If I find one with lipstick on it I don't reroll those ones, I just say 'That's the closest I'll get to kissing her.' and I just smoke those ones like they are." Butt collection methods are as various as the ones that practice it. The hunter/gatherer develops a methodology that takes into account a great amount of sociological observations:

Go to where the tourists are; many of them have purchased cigarettes in non-taxed nations like the US or Japan, and their butts are much bigger. (These larger specimens are known as Cadillacs or Hollywood Butts.)

Coffee breaks and lunch hours are paramount. A person can find several ounces outside a single workplace, with a retail value of twenty dollars. On a rainy day the challenges mount. People can become territorial. On the whole, however, butt-picking allows for a generosity that might not otherwise be there. It allows for those with nothing else to share from the bounty of the earth, so to speak.

Although butt-picking is nearly unknown outside specific socio-economic subclasses, it has been targeted in recent times. Provincial legislation emerging in nearly every province in Canada has first forced smokers outside, which actually may have increased the harvest, but they have now moved smoking areas away from doorways and often out of cover from the environment. In the colder regions this too may have increased the yield of butts due to the fact that butts will go out quickly in freezing temperatures and don't get wet. In rainy areas, however, this legislation has led to ashtray ponds of butt soup. The truly desperate are not above drying messes like these out.

By far, the worst assault to the butt-picker's way of life is the introduction of lock-box receptacles, often bearing the insignia "Butt Stop". You will often see these on fire, or with the locks broken by someone stealing the huge cache within.

Will the butt-picker be a thing of the past as public opinion turns so strongly against smoking, and the Nannie State imposes more regulations for the people's own good? It is certainly nothing new. In "Down and Out in Paris and London," George Orwell documents the butt-picker in 1930s England. Back then most cigarettes were filterless. Oh, the good old days.

Tavis W Dodds writes regularly for Victoria Street Newz and his winning entry in the DTES Writer's Jamboree Contest is due to appear in an upcoming issue of Geist Magazine.

Opening My Eyes By Becoming a Binner

by Kira

Well, I decided to try this so called "dumpster diving."

Ain't it funny, more than a few people were surprised I started this up and I'd like to tell you why I did it. The basics: I'm poor, that's a common reason. I'm stuck on the Disability system, for now. I need more money. I had seen so many other people doing it & ca\$hing in so I thought, why can't I do the same? I mean, big time this time.

Years back I had "dabbled" in the can collecting gig before, hey free money just lying around, and it does add up. So I wanted it to add up some more. I started heavier hauls playing around cleaning out a few "ca\$h in" dumpsters and raiding recycle boxes, though getting tired of carrying a load on my handlebars or running shopping carts back to stores (my policy is return it to where it came from I am so sick of seeing abandoned carts littering neighbourhoods it looks awful). So to save time and money, and thinking, "well if I'm gonna do it full-on, I better do it proper," bought a trailer from Tony's Trailers, called the "Street Legal Shopping Cart."

I was apprehensive at first, thinking how will I like it? Will I really use it enough to justify the money I spent? As it was, all my fears were blown away, I got a grant to pay for the cart and Tony was very accommodating and within a week after I used the trailer I was loving the convenience and freedom. I could collect so much more so easily and money wasn't an issue. Plus it is such a great workout. Why pay the gym when the gym can pay me?? My only regret is that I didn't buy a trailer YEARS ago! I wish! Goes to show how we can be so scared of change, even GOOD change, that it can hold a person back from good results. It's true, you never will know unless you try...something good that is. Plus being able to carry other heavy stuff like groceries or stuff I find on the side of the road is a huge help too. I've only had to ask for a ride once the whole time I've had my trailer...almost 2 years now!

The second main reason I got into the collecting activities is talking to binners and hearing all these "horror stories," recurring complaints and the controversy that went along with being judged, stereotyped, and viewed a certain way by society as well as hearing about the rotten bunch or irresponsible notorious binners ruining it for the rest of us, I wanted to go experience & investigate this for myself and get BOTH sides and see what I can do to change peoples minds about how "dumpster divers" are viewed by being conscientious.

By the way, the biggest complaint: people leaving messes, next is noise. I am very happy when people clean up their messes they make it easier for the rest of us. I know better than anyone not to leave a mess, that



is my job I work as a cleaner! I think it's good to talk to people to see where they are coming from, not be "secretive" about it like I'm doing "something wrong." The biggest thing I found that helps there: ASKING people permission, it shows respect.

As well, my next motivation is, just to prove to a certain "group" of people who were giving me a hard time, I'd figure since success is the best revenge, I'd make those haters even more mad by doing what they do but do it better! I wanted to show I was different, that I could do this same activity surrounded by negative connotations and impressions, and take away the positives from it, like separate the positive from the negative, and show what can be done. "Pull out the positive" from it. Prove I could succeed honestly at producing my profit.

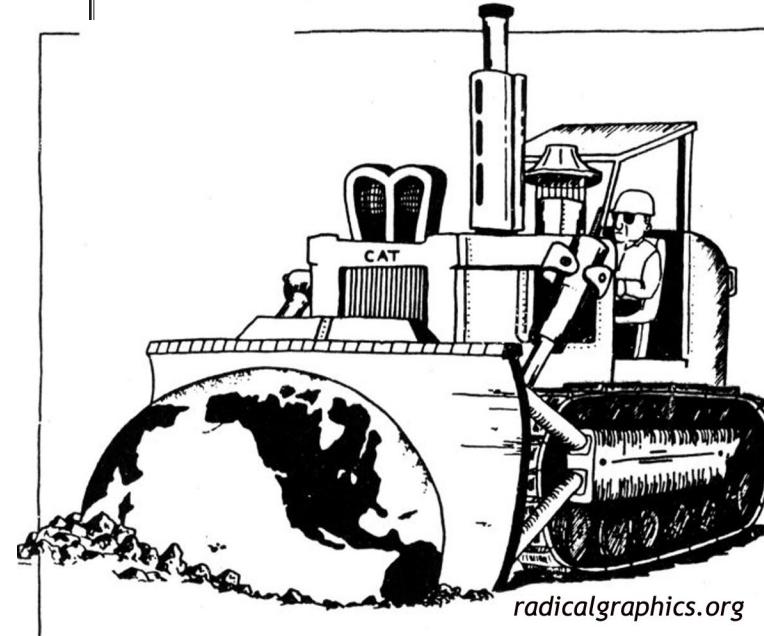
I'd like to think I am doing binning for the right reasons. It's for a good cause, 'cause I like to eat well!! It's enjoyable to head to the bank with bills and change and turn that into even more bills and throw it in the bank, I like to say after I ca\$h out: "straight to the bank," or the grocery store. Since I don't smoke, do drugs or drink I get to see 100% profit so that makes it worthwhile, and I am grateful I can make money this way. I don't feel so powerless or helpless as much.

It's very gratifying to see people take notice too, hear a lady call after me: "thank you for being responsible" when I clean up a mess or put down a lid, leave it the way I found it. People see me helping myself and have started to save bottles so I don't go "on the hunt" as much as I used to. It's not that much but I don't want to get greedy or obsessed and have this run my life. It can be very time consuming looking and not finding much, it doesn't "balance out" as much as people would like to think. I'd like to work at a higher paying job, really, and not feel trapped on a Disability Allowance.

As well, my "dumpster diving" has evolved into more opportunist endeavors. Instead of literally "nickle-and-diming" myself picking here and there for bottles, I go to places that have the highest chance there are bottles, and lots of them. If I see batteries or metals on the side of the road or bottles I'll grab them too, I still am on the lookout, but I don't really go out of my way anymore. More if I'm "passing by." The main reason too is it is turning into not being worth it. It's discouraging and disappointing that most spots are so picked over so many times my exercise has turned into an exercise in frustration as I come up empty handed time and again at places there used to be even some bottles. There goes more healthier food out of my mouth.

It wasn't like this even year ago ... I don't want to go to these "poor places" for freeloading & handouts. I want to keep myself safe and avoid trouble. I want to buy my food and stuff that they just don't hand out at the free places. I can't expect everything for free! The extra income I generate from bottles translates into more food, so less visits to foodbanks and free meals. If I don't have to, I don't want to frequent these places. It makes me more independent and help myself, gives me more power and control in my life so I don't feel so trapped and limited, gives me more choices, and helps keep my dignity intact.

I just hope I left a good impression & good example to whoever's ground I stepped on - or rode through.





The goal of the Red Tent campaign is to persuade the federal government to enact a funded National Housing Strategy that will end homelessness and ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for all persons living in Canada. Its strategy is to use red tents and like items as symbols on the streets and in the media during the 2010 Olympics to draw attention to Canada's homelessness crisis, educate the public about the need for a funded national housing strategy and mobilize people across the country to pressure government to take action on homelessness.

Laura Stannard of the Citywide Housing Coalition, a partner in the Red Tent campaign, says "In the 1970s and 1980s we had excellent federal housing programs and there was very little homelessness in Vancouver. The federal government must take responsibility. Permanent programs that build more social housing each year leave a legacy of healthy, affordable communities for future generations."

The Red Tent campaign follows a BC Court of Appeal decision in December 2009 that gives homeless people the right to erect a shelter on City property if shelter spaces are full. Pivot Legal Society has provided [Vancouver's] City Council with a legal opinion from Joe Arvay, QC, which sets out some of the implications of the new ruling for enforcement of City bylaws. The broader impact of the decision is profound; homeless people can now sleep at night on public property free of harassment by police, municipal officials and security guards.

Pivot Legal Society has asked the City of Vancouver to address these new legal implications for City by-laws. "The Adams decision means that current enforcement policies which have been used against homeless people taking shelter on public space may now be illegal," says John Richardson, Executive Director of Pivot Legal Society. "It's imperative that the City ensure the Charter rights and safety of homeless people are protected as we enter a period of competing demands for public space and an intense security, police and military presence."

Red Tent is an open-source, grassroots campaign, supported by individuals and organizations who have agreed to a Basis of Unity. Supporters can help Red Tent succeed by sponsoring a tent, or by taking an action to end homelessness.

I made this limited edition piece of art to raise awareness and money to support this cause, plus a little more.

First, I hope to raise enough money to give a \$500 donation to the Pivot Legal Society's Red Tent campaign. Second, to buy \$1,000 worth of art supplies and distribute it directly to artists in my community who are homeless or have experienced homelessness.

Artwork information:

Title: Red Tent 212282010

Medium: Two color silk screen, grease crayon, ink

Paper size: 8.5" x 11"

Edition size: 125, Signed and numbered

Price: \$25 US or CAN

Shipping \$5 Anywhere in US or Canada

Payment: customers in Canada - Paypal, check, cash. customers in US - Paypal, cash.

Simply email yuriarajs@gmail.com with the following information:

1. How many prints you want.
2. Your complete name and mailing address. Unless it is not being mailed. Then just your name.
3. How you would like to pay. If by Paypal, please include your account name and I will send you an invoice there. You will receive a confirmation email from me which will include a mailing address to mail cash or check if you are paying that way.

Thank you for supporting my ideas, the arts and the homeless in my community.

Yuri Arajs -

The Red Tent Campaign

**From Vancouver based Pivot Legal Society
and the Citywide Housing Coalition**

Questions and Answers:

Is homelessness a problem in Canada?

Canada's homeless population is somewhere between 200,000 and 300,000. In Vancouver, there are about 2000 homeless people living on the streets.

Isn't homelessness really complicated to solve?

Canada is the only industrialized nation without a national housing plan. The cost of keeping people off the street is significantly cheaper than the medical and other associated costs of leaving them on the streets. Solving homelessness isn't as complicated as curing cancer – it's a matter of building homes and putting supports in them so people are successful.

What are the implications of the Victoria (City) v. Adams BC Appeal Court decision?

The Court of Appeal decision in Victoria (City) v. Adams requires changes to how the City regulates public space. The Adams decision means that the City now has an obligation to accommodate the right of homeless people to temporary shelters on public property.

Are Pivot and the other partner organizations trying to make the City look bad during the Olympics?

No. Homelessness is a reality of our city – it is important for visitors and the media to see the real Vancouver, which is more nuanced than Olympic branding. Only with media attention, will we be able to push politicians to create a funded national housing plan.

Is it exploitation for the campaign to give tents to homeless people?

Homeless people, as all people involved, have a self-determined role in the campaign. Homeless people involved with the project are aware of the risks and goals associated with the campaign and participate knowingly. Our Basis of Unity states: "the empowerment and genuine participation of people who are homeless, working to ensure their safety and working from a foundation of respect for their experiences, perspectives and needs."

What if people take tents and participate in civil disobedience?

Red Tent is an open-sourced campaign with a statement of unity that connects many different individuals and organizations working around housing issues. The statement of unity includes a commitment to peaceful protest and resistance and tactics that do not lead to harm to people or destruction of property.

For more information, and the full Basis of Unity, visit www.redtents.org.

Yuri's Red Tent



Fundraiser

Poverty Torch Relay a Huge Success!

The poverty spotlight shone all across BC starting in Golden on January 17th, then onto Vernon, Kamloops, Nelson, Quesnel, Greenville, Sechelt, 100 Mile House, Whistler, Chilliwack and Abbotsford. In each city, various organizations including the Council for Canadians, child care workers, and musicians brought attention to poverty issues across the province - and poverty rates varying from 13.8% (Kamloops) to 25.3% (100 Mile House).

On February 2nd the Torch was transported from Langley (poverty rate 21.5%) to Vancouver (26.6%) - through Surrey, New Westminster, Burnaby, Coquitlam, North Van, West Van, and into the DTES in time for the Third Annual Poverty Olympics.

Read all about it at povertyolympics.ca.



On February 5th the Poverty Torch enjoyed a Kayak ride crossing Barnet Beach to Deep Cove.

The Advocate

By W. Robert Arnold

There is a rumour that Canada is a democracy; but don't you believe it. Just because we vote about every four years does not justify calling what we have here a democracy.

For me democracy means something different. I like what Abraham Lincoln had to say about democracy. He said "Government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth." Well, he was far too hopeful as history has shown. I know of nowhere that that kind of democracy exists. It surely does not exist in Canada.

We certainly have government of the people. But we do not have government by the people or for the people. Roughly every four years we elect well to do elitists to represent us in Parliament and as soon as they get there they stop representing us and start representing the interests of their party and of the people and corporations that give the party money to run their election campaigns. So in fact, we have government by the rich and powerful and their corporations, not by the people.

We, the people, then have little choice but to accept everything done in our name by the government until the next election. When we don't like what the government is doing we demonstrate against it, write angry letters to the politicians we elected and to the newspapers; and we are for the most part ignored. We are not very effective using these tools. Our successes are a few and minor. We never truly get to govern ourselves: government by the people.

As long as we do not have government by the people, we shall never have government for the people. Government will continue to act in its own interest and in the interests of the rich and influential elite who run Canada, and by inference runs us.

We know that the government is not acting in our interest when we see cuts to health care, cuts to legal aid, cuts to funding for nongovernmental organizations that work in the interests of people and cuts to government support programs for poor people and people with special problems in our community. We see that the government is not acting in our interest when it moves to privatize services and divests itself of valuable public holdings. The evidence is everywhere we look. There is no refuting it.

In Canada we elect members of Parliament, who belong to political parties for the most part. Once in a while an independent runs successfully in an election or leaves a party to sit as an independent; and on occasion that person has changed the course of government for a short moment.

In Canada the leader of the party that wins the most seats becomes a dictator for about four years. In recent times the prime ministers of Canada have centralized more and more of the power of Parliament in their own office. By doing this they become more obviously the dictators they wish to be. Stephen Harper has taken this too far. Today, Stephen Harper is the "de facto" dictator of Canada. The evidence for this is all too clear. He has closed Parliament twice now to escape the oversight necessary in a democracy. This is not allowed in the British parliamentary system upon which ours is based.

Not since King Charles I of England lost his head for closing Parliament for his own reasons has this been allowed. Yet we feel we can do nothing about Harper's use of the Governor General to prorogue Parliament. This is not necessarily so.

We must organize a nonpartisan voting bloc made up of "the people." If that voting bloc becomes big enough to influence the election in an obvious way, it will be big enough to influence government and create government by the people and for the people. Until this happens we will continue to be ineffective in our efforts to obtain justice, equality and freedom.

We will continue to be the pawns of the elite who run Canada.

The ball is in our court!

Robert is a 67 year old man who has fought poverty, his own and others, for over 45 years.



Along the Royal Road

by Brian Mason

More than a few decades ago, when I was in elementary school colouring world maps mostly pink to show the extensive reach of the British Commonwealth, my efforts to stay within the lines were watched over by portraits of Queen Elizabeth and Prince

Philip hanging on the walls of classrooms. Those portraits never changed; their gazes were comforting. These important people, I sensed, were somehow in charge of everything – and all would be well. Back then, of course, I didn't understand the monarchy or what it meant for where I lived in Canada and for democracy.

Most people, I suspect, spend little time thinking about how they are governed – and Canada has a complicated system of governance to think about. If you don't believe me, try explaining it to someone. Better yet, if you're up for a challenge, try comparing us with our republican neighbour to the south.

Consider this. There's the aforementioned monarchy – some call it a compound monarchy – comprising the Queen, the Governor General and the 10 Lieutenant Governors, not to mention the prerogative and reserve powers accompanying the role. Our written constitution, patriated in 1982, thereby making us autonomous, includes a Charter of Rights, yet it's far from the full story when it comes to the rules of our federal state. Most of its fundamentals are unwritten – and likely will remain so as they derive from long-standing British practices. There is a federal Parliament (bicameral) and provincial Legislatures (unicameral every one, though this was not always the case in some provinces). Responsible (Cabinet) government is what we live under, a creature as unlike the USA system as Harper is from Obama – and the one most troubling to progressives and electoral-reform advocates today. Because it is not to the electors that the government of the day is responsible, rather to the House of Commons. There, procedures for passing legislation – the laws of our land – are lengthy and difficult to follow, and that's before things get to the Senate.

What makes it all grind along so differently than in the USA is the relatively strong executive level of government in Canada, much of which is centered in the office of the prime minister. The prime minister is a powerful figure both for what she or he does as leader of the government as well as for the appointment and control powers which have accrued to this office over time. An example is the power to appoint judges to the Supreme Court of Canada. That's real power. By comparison, the president of the USA is a political wimp (witness Obama's struggles in reforming health care even as his party controls both houses of Congress) though one might be forgiven for thinking otherwise judging by past episodes of West Wing. Most of the Star-Spangled excess results from the president's doubling as the formal head of state and the political executive. Our head of state, for most practical and legal purposes, is the Governor General – though the Queen still appoints the GG, albeit on the advice of our Prime Minister. Are you still with me? Now try explaining how the provinces and territories fit within the Canadian federation. More likely, by this point, you're wondering where I'm headed with all this.

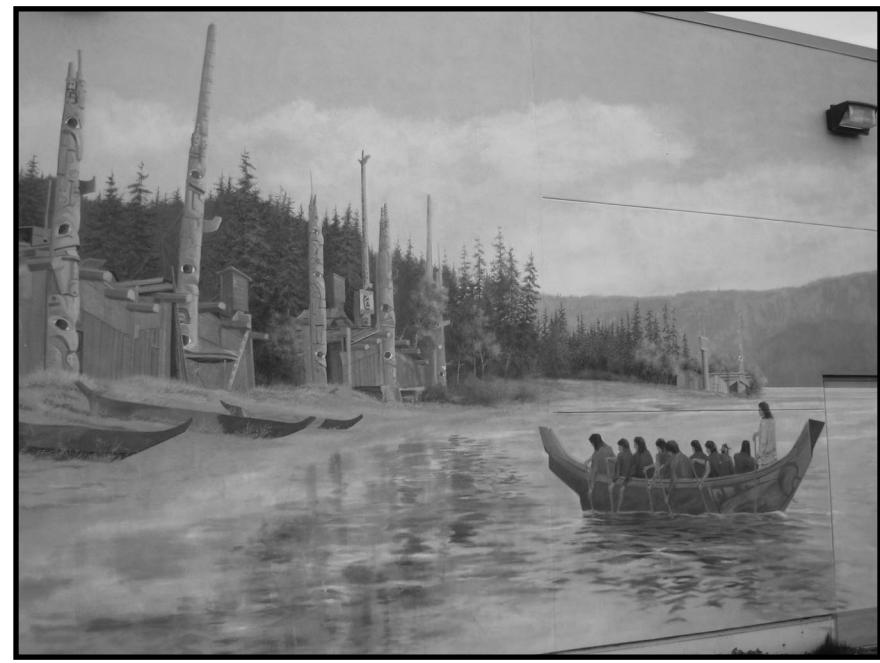
Canada has evolved into a weak federation. The centrifugal forces of regionalism have tugged steadily at the bonds that first brought us together. In 2003 the provinces and territories even founded their own exclusive club (sans the Feds), the Council of the Federation, as ironic a name as could be imagined considering the purpose of the endeavour – to diminish the federation itself. More ironic yet, they saw fit to headquartered the council in Ottawa – perhaps as a humbling reminder to themselves that all federations require a central government. Thirteen squabbling, self-centred premiers and territorial leaders do not a nation make.

Provinces now expect money and favours from Ottawa with few or no strings attached. National programmes have become almost impossible to implement, certainly not with any admirable vision or national standards. If medicare were proposed in 2010, it likely wouldn't get past first reading stage in the House of Commons. The lack of a national social housing strategy over the past several decades is another example. Our sense of nationhood and equality (of wealth and opportunity) has dwindled. Into this void have stepped the corporate leaders of Canada who have done their best over the past three decades to gut – and take over – government at all levels. Take the most prominent example.

Thomas D'Aquino retired in October 2009 after more than 25 years as CEO of the Canadian Council of Chief Executives (formerly the Business Council on National Issues). More than any other pressure group, this right-wing collection of pinstriped suits – composed of "the heads of 150 of Canada's most powerful business empires, representing \$4.5 trillion in assets and more than \$850 billion in annual revenues (three times the national budget)" – has had unfettered access to senior politicians during its relentless quest to imprint a ruinous neo-liberal agenda on Canada's social, economic and political systems. A young Jean Chretien, when he was Liberal finance minister in the 1970s, admitted that he never prepared a budget without consulting with the Business Council on National Issues. All this was fawningly reported by journalist Peter Newman in a tribute article to the retiring D'Aquino in a recent issue of Canadian Business magazine. So much for fair play on the playing fields of democracy. When was the last time the federal finance minister personally talked to your organization before putting the budget together? D'Aquino is the same zealot who credits himself for convincing incoming prime minister Brian Mulroney in the mid-1980s to push through a free trade agenda that, ever since, has steadily eroded Canada's self-sufficiency while punishing the environment in the bargain.

Business leaders – admittedly with buckets of money at their disposal – have been able to corrupt our democracy (one of many reasons for increasing levels of public mistrust of government and politicians). They've learnt how to use the networks of government power to get what they want, including access to the powerful. They understand how government works – at least those pressing their case do – and, behind the scenes, have pushed a consistent, coherent policy platform. Mass media, which they own, has carried their message to indoctrinate the general population. The Left needs to relearn how to do this. Government can be taken over: Stephen Harper did it. First it must be understood – and that's where I was headed.

Brian Mason lives in James Bay.



God Bliss

by Gila Svirsky

We have a weekend home in the sweetest little town in Israel – Nahariya. This small, northern town caresses the Mediterranean at a particularly picturesque location, and from our balcony we can watch the sailboats skimming along the placid sea. In the early morning, we see the fishing boats go out, a spotter aloft in the prow scanning the azure waters for fishy schools below, and in the evening we take drinks on that balcony (verbena tea for me) and watch the sun lower itself from a swirl pink sky and sizzle out in the sea. And then the dog has her last outing for the day, and we settle down to dinner and a good movie on TV.

It could be bliss.

Last night I watched a popular TV satire called “A Wonderful Country,” reprising Israel’s good deeds in sending a field hospital and PR team to Haiti. PR team? Yes, and well worth it, with the Israeli doctors saving lives and delivering babies enough to warrant many press releases.

“Good job, good job, Israelis!” gush the patients. From under the rubble, one Haitian peers out and moans, “It was almost worth having an earthquake to meet all you wonderful folks from Israel.”

It’s hard work transforming international public opinion after the Israeli bombardment of Gaza one year ago, which played out so poorly in the Goldstone Report and European capitals. But in Israel, there’s no need to shift public opinion at all, after that very popular war. “What blockade? There’s no blockade of Gaza,” said my cousins in Jerusalem, who are as well informed as most Israelis. If you place a million people under siege and the local media are not there to cover it, does the siege exist?

And does protest exist, when the police crack down on peaceful demonstrators exercising their right to disagree with state policies? Over 700 protesters were arrested during the Gaza War for trying to make anti-war statements. Nonviolent demonstrators who march every Friday in Palestinian villages where the Separation Barrier is being erected have experienced live fire, stun grenades, tear gas, and new forms of crowd control – the “skunk guns” that were so bad even the police were forced to stop using them. These methods have already caused deaths and injuries. Ongoing protests in East Jerusalem against the eviction of Palestinians from their homes to make room for settlers have met with more arrests and brutality. Last week, to the misfortune of the police, they even arrested the director of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, a bad way to improve relations with civil society.

So is it all about image? Inside Israel, it’s about no image. Israeli media carried no reporting whatsoever from inside Gaza during the bombardment, and it was considered subversive during the fighting to listen to reports from CNN, the BBC or, God forbid, al-Jazeera. It is still forbidden for Israeli journalists to enter Gaza and report how families are bearing up in homes with gaping holes in their roofs because Israel does not allow construction materials to be brought in. Now if the Gazans only lived in Haiti... As for the West Bank, why should the journalists bother? Brutality by the army is not new and hence not newsworthy. To catch anybody’s attention, human rights organizations like B’Tselem have to resort to teaser headlines, smart animations, and videos of Gaza rappers (see www.btselem.org/English - full disclosure, I’m affiliated).

So here’s what grabbed the headlines in Israel all week: Sarah Netanyahu, the prime minister’s wife, was accused of underpaying and overworking the cleaning lady. If you’re out and about in Israel, you better have a clear opinion about this: Is it true, or just a plot to undermine the peace plan that our Prime Minister is eager to launch? Here’s a hint: Riding by our demonstration for economic justice several years ago, Sarah Netanyahu got out of her chauffeur-driven car to share her views with us: “If I get along on minimum wage,” said Sarah, “anyone can.” One hardly knows where to begin.

There is a country full of people on this beautiful Saturday afternoon watching the sailboats skim by, driving out to catch the fields full of red poppies after the heavy winter rains, or walking their dogs through the daffodils. But they won’t be crossing the Separation Barrier anytime

soon to witness the horrors on the other side, and the news on TV in the evening won’t bring that horror into their homes. “What occupation?” is now the most common reaction of passersby to our Women in Black vigil in Jerusalem. For the young, it’s an honest question; for the older, it’s a smirk and walk on.

Gila Svirsky is an Israeli Jew, and a grandmother, deeply involved in peace and human rights activism. Read her writings at [www.GilaSvirsky.com](http://GilaSvirsky.com)

ed:- The 6th International Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW) will take place across the globe from the 1st to the 14th of March. Info: www.apartheidweek.org.



Drop The Boycott

It is time the U.S. dropped the boycott against Cuba for humanitarian reasons. Visitors regularly report increasing levels of hardship there affecting a wide cross-section of the population. This includes very low income for the working, a high level of unemployment, substandard housing, hunger and increase in medical problems and lack of drugs.

Apparently Cuban medical expertise and drugs are going to countries such as Venezuela at the expense of the Cuban population. In addition neighborhood surveillance prevents the locals from protesting conditions at home.

Dropping the boycott would substantially ease economic pressure there, and the ongoing needs of the people.

Contact the Prime Minister Stephen Harper <pm@pm.gc.ca> and President Obama <barackobama@hotmail.com>.

Sue Hiscocks - Victoria BC

ed:- I've travelled twice to Cuba with IFCO/Pastors for Peace. 2010 will be their 21st year defying the US blockade and transporting much needed hospital and school supplies. I'm not familiar with "neighbourhood surveillance" in Cuba - the locals I spoke with are very involved with their revolution, very aware of the impacts of the 49 year USA imposed economic blockade. You can read perspectives from independent bloggers at HavanaTimes.org. To get involved with this year's Humanitarian Aid to Cuba Caravan, contact pastorsforpeace.org or locally email Randy at vicc@telus.net.



Cuba Reaffirms Solidarity with Haiti

HAVANA TIMES, Feb. 9 (HavanaTimes.org) — Cuban Vice President Esteban Lazo arrived to Haiti on Monday to meet with Haitian President Rene Preval and visit the Cuban medical brigade.

Lazo bore a message from former President Fidel Castro for the over 400 Cubans working in the neighboring Caribbean nation at five tent hospitals in and around the capital and at other facilities throughout the country. “Today, you are writing one of the most beautiful pages in the history of human medicine,” wrote Castro.

Lazo told President Preval that he had come in representation of the people and government of Cuba “to reaffirm our solidarity as an expression of the deep historic and brotherly ties that bind us.”

For over a decade Cuba has maintained a commitment to health care assistance in Haiti that has also included the training of several hundred young Haitian doctors in Cuba. Preval noted: “They did not wait for the earthquake to be with us,” reported the Cuban News Agency.

Traveling with Lazo to Haiti are Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez and deputy Health minister Marcia Cobas. The high level delegation will also visit the Haitian and US doctors working alongside the Cubans in the earthquake recovery effort.



photo: Blake H. Schmidt

Reverend Lucius Walker, founder of The Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) and Media Co-ordinator Ellen Bernstein are acknowledged for their work during the 2009 Graduation Ceremony of the Latin American School of Medicine in Havana. IFCO administers the scholarship program at the Latin American School of Medicine in Cuba for US students.



HAVANA TIMES (HavanaTimes.Org), Feb. 3

Seven US doctors leave for Haiti on Wednesday to work alongside the Cuban medical brigade in the earthquake recovery effort, reported the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) in a press release.

Hailing from Harlem, Brooklyn, the Bronx and Staten Island in New York as well as from Houston and Minnesota, the US doctors studied medicine on scholarships at the Havana-based Latin American School of Medicine.

IFCO executive director Rev. Lucius Walker Jr. said "These dedicated and skilled young doctors are ready to serve. They received their MD degrees in Cuba, and they are uniquely prepared for the multiple challenges of this urgent mission. We will send them to Haiti with backpacks full of medicines and supplies."

In all more than 100 doctors from Venezuela, Chile, Spain, Mexico, Colombia, and Canada are also working alongside the over 400 Cuban doctors and support staff, notes IFCO.

Students from 49 different nations of the Americas, Africa, and other regions are currently enrolled at Cuba's Latin American School of Medicine. Among the graduates are 33 young people from the US.

Likewise, 400 young Haitians who have also received full-scholarship medical training at the Latin American School of Medicine, and are now attending the injured in Haiti.

Photos (above): Cuban pediatrician Zilda del Toro with Baby Elizabeth, the "Miracle of Jacmel" and her mother. Elizabeth was trapped for a week before a team of Colombian rescue workers unearthed and brought her to the Cuban doctors at the Jacmel Field Hospital- read the full article at www.granma.cubaweb.cu/2010/01/22/interna/artic10.html. A Cuban doctor treats earthquake victims in the Hospital Universitaire de la Paix in central Port-au-Prince: REUTERS/Staff Photographer (below).



Dear Couz

By Jennifer Hastie

Yes, it's been a while since I have written. We were travelling. A group of us went to learn about the Basque country; that's right, over in northern Spain. Basque traditional lands also stretch into southern France. As you know, the borders almost always change when countries get conquered. The last time the border changed between France and Spain was in the 17th century. That change split the Basque lands into two parts.

The same situation occurred, of course, to our native peoples over here in North America. A good example is the Nuu-Chah-Nulth who have relatives in the Makah nation in Washington state. But I am getting away from telling you about the Basques.

Like our natives, the Basques are considered to be an indigenous peoples. The Basques say, "We have always been here." We hear the same thing from our native peoples today here in B.C.

At first the Basques apparently did not mind being taken over. Ferdinand and Isabella, the Royals ruling over Spain in the 15th century, told them that they could keep their own laws, called Fueros. Lucky for the Basques, the Fueros became part of the legal code in 1526. Long before Ferdinand and Isabella came on the scene, there were the Roman rulers. They said that the Basques could "co-exist," meaning letting them govern themselves.

At the time of the French/Spanish rule, the Basque government operated on a truly democratic basis—the Government was "communally run." Touchy issues were tackled, for example, the land on the river bottom was very fertile—what families should be there? How these difficult problems were worked out is anybody's guess, but what we heard, Couz, was that at the time, the Basque system of government was considered superior to what was going on in the rest of the country where there was a feudal system. That meant that your average Joe basically had no rights or land and was at the mercy of the Feudal Lord.

Today the Basques pay their taxes to their own local government, not the Spanish government. They are apparently exempt from military service. We were also told that today the French Basques have fewer rights than the Spanish Basques. However, in both Spain and France they can be educated in their own language.

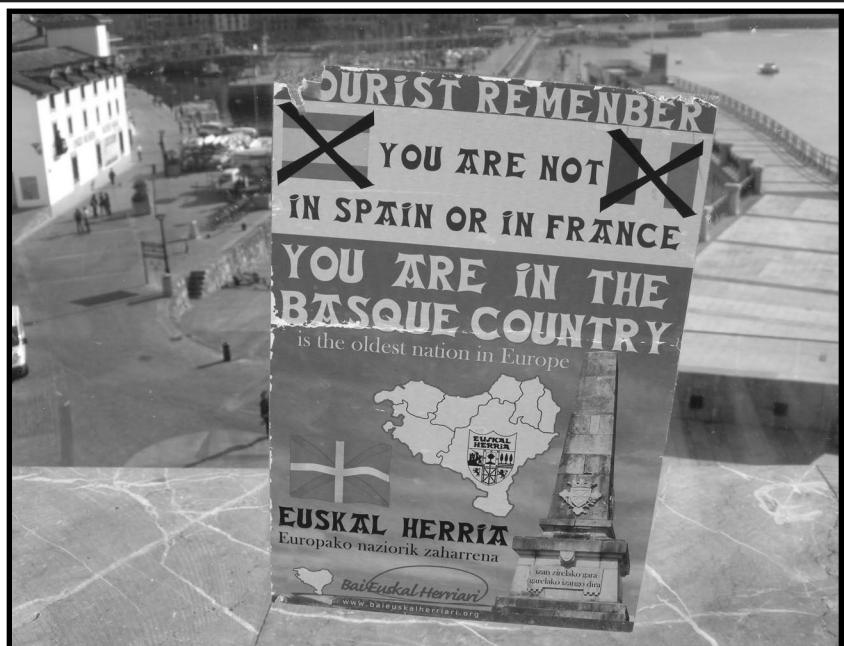
The Christians, coming along in the 17th century, called the Basques "Pagans," a nasty word in those days. The Inquisition really did a number on them by attempting to stamp them out. Also, Franco, Spain's dictator until 1975, attempted to eliminate them as a culture in their own right and in spite of their previous rights in Spain.

Just like our natives, the Basques didn't write anything down—it was an oral culture. They started to write things down in the 16th century.

I saw lots of other similarities between Basques and our native peoples as well. For one thing, the Basque religion appears to have been lost, although their elders know that their religion then was basically an "animist" religion. Animists have a respect for all living things. The Basque "emblem" shows four parts joined together as one: earth, fire, water and air. Our natives, all across Canada, have respect for all living things as well, and I believe that some of Canada's native cultures believe that spirits dwell in the elements of the earth.

I saw other parallels with our natives, too. Just as the Cedar tree is important to the various west coast cultures, so is the fern to the Basques. They used it in various ways, from eating the baby fern shoots to making mattresses. Ferns were used as insulation from noise and unsavoury smells in their dwellings.

Basques were traditionally whalers. When they killed a whale they made sure that all parts of the body were used. In short, the Basques had respect for all living



things in the environment. The Makah in Washington State have maintained the right to hunt the whale, even though they say that they have no plans to kill them for food.

I can hear you complaining from here, Couz, when you say "...but what about that radical group called the ETA? How can you respect the Basques when they act like that? Couz, the ETA is just a small radical group of Basques. The ETA became very strong when the rights of the Basques were being eaten away by Franco. No, the ETA did NOT bomb the railway station in Madrid five years ago, which killed 191 people and injured 1800. The Basques were initially accused of doing so by the Spanish government. This statement was eventually corrected, but by then, of course, that news item was spread all over the world. I hope that most people have become aware of the correct information.

Today, the Basques have control over their finances, school system and highways. We were told that although they would still like to separate from the mainstream governments in Spain and France, they are more settled now because some of their political prisoners have been released. In fact, the ETA today has trouble recruiting new members and the groups are often poorly trained, says our guide.

Canada would make so much more progress if the provinces and the Feds got off the pot and did the right thing with our native peoples. Anyone in the Department of Indian Affairs, or even in the Campbell regime, knows what needs to be done. Quit stalling, all of you. The problem of "the Indians" will not go away until justice has been served. In the meantime, you are spending valuable taxpayers' money on useless meetings, hotels, salaries of extra staff, and, of course, huge legal bills. This is our money, money that should be spent on services for all of us.

You know, Couz, I often ask myself why I care about these indigenous cultures. I am not one of them, as you know. What's in it for me? Well, it's really obvious to me. When you destroy one of these indigenous cultures you are losing a valuable connection with a simpler way of life that was kinder to our planet. One day, all of us in our world may have to return to that way of life. We will have lost a connection with cultures that are rich in art, wisdom and respect for all living beings.

It is ironical that we can take native people's art and use it in the production of Olympic medals. We use their dances and their dancers in the "grand" opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympics. The government has allowed a mass-production company to use the Cowichan people's design of their sweaters and allowed a non-native company to mass produce a product to sell to people from all over the world. They will be buying an inferior sweater, believing (unless they are very savvy) that they are buying an authentic Cowichan sweater. We exploit our Native peoples' cultures—yes, I call it exploitation--yet, we do not respect them as a people.

Our government—and that's you and me, Couz--stall on settling native land claims because we know that the legal system will honour indigenous rights.

In the end, now that we've really disturbed our native people's way of life, we criticize them and refuse to provide enough services to heal those natives who have been damaged by our lifestyle. That legacy is Canada's shame.

Jennifer and her husband live in Victoria today. She is a healthy, active senior who enjoys writing volunteer articles for various publications.

Some Comments on Osama bin Laden and 9/11

by Gordon Pollard

I would like to thank everyone who has taken the time to comment - pro or con - on the series of articles I've written recently for *Victoria Street Newz* about 9/11 and Osama bin Laden. I'm pleased that the overwhelming majority of these comments have been "pro" but I've been happy to hear from the "con" side as well.

While Hallmark Cards once famously used as its slogan, "When you care enough to send the very best," I've always believed it is equally important to hear from those who care enough to send the very worst - and I've certainly received a few messages from some of those people.

I've been called both a "nutbar" and a "crackpot" and, while I don't mind that at all, I would personally much prefer to be called a "looney-bird." I think the words "nutbar" and "crackpot" have a very harsh, brating sound whereas the word "loony-bird" has a much softer, more musical ring to it. Alternatively, I rather like the term "cantankerous curmudgeon," which has quite a nice rhythmic balance.

One angry respondent said I don't seem to realize that unless we fight the Taliban and al Qaeda in Afghanistan, we might one day face the "terrifying prospect" of having to fight them here in Canada. I must admit I also find that prospect quite disconcerting. Personally, I have enough trouble as it is walking safely across the parking lot at the Hillside Mall without some damned Taliban or al Qaeda sniper lurking behind cars and blasting away with an AK-47 rifle.

I've even received a couple of messages from people who think I'm "unpatriotic" and "dangerous." In this regard, I think I should finally come clean and confess that I am, indeed, a pretty dangerous fellow, and CSIS and the CIA should definitely be keeping a close eye on me. I admit that I've been a long-time member of both of the major terrorist organizations in Victoria: the Tallyho-ban and al Quadra!

In fact, I had been seriously thinking about overthrowing the government of the United States this past month, but I was just so busy with other projects that I simply couldn't find the time to get around to doing it. I am very much hoping, however, that I will be able to make time later this month to finally sneak across the border and topple the U.S. government. If so, my very first act as supreme dictator will be to move my provisional government to Honolulu. After all, who the hell wants to live in Washington, D.C.?

Actually, however, my favourite response to the articles was a little joke passed along to me by a well-known business owner in downtown Victoria, who must remain anonymous since he isn't terribly enthusiastic about the prospect of his store possibly being fire-bombed. The joke goes: **Question:** What is the main similarity and the main difference between Osama bin Laden and members of the Canadian Senate? **Answer:** The

main similarity is that both have been dead for years. The main difference is that while Osama is buried in Afghanistan, Canadian Senators walk around like zombies hoping will notice they're dead.

If you will bear with me, I can't resist (though maybe I should) adding a little joke of my own:

Question: Name one major difference between Osama bin Laden and George W. Bush. **Answer:** Bin Laden spoke excellent English whereas Bush dissin't spake da langage two guud.

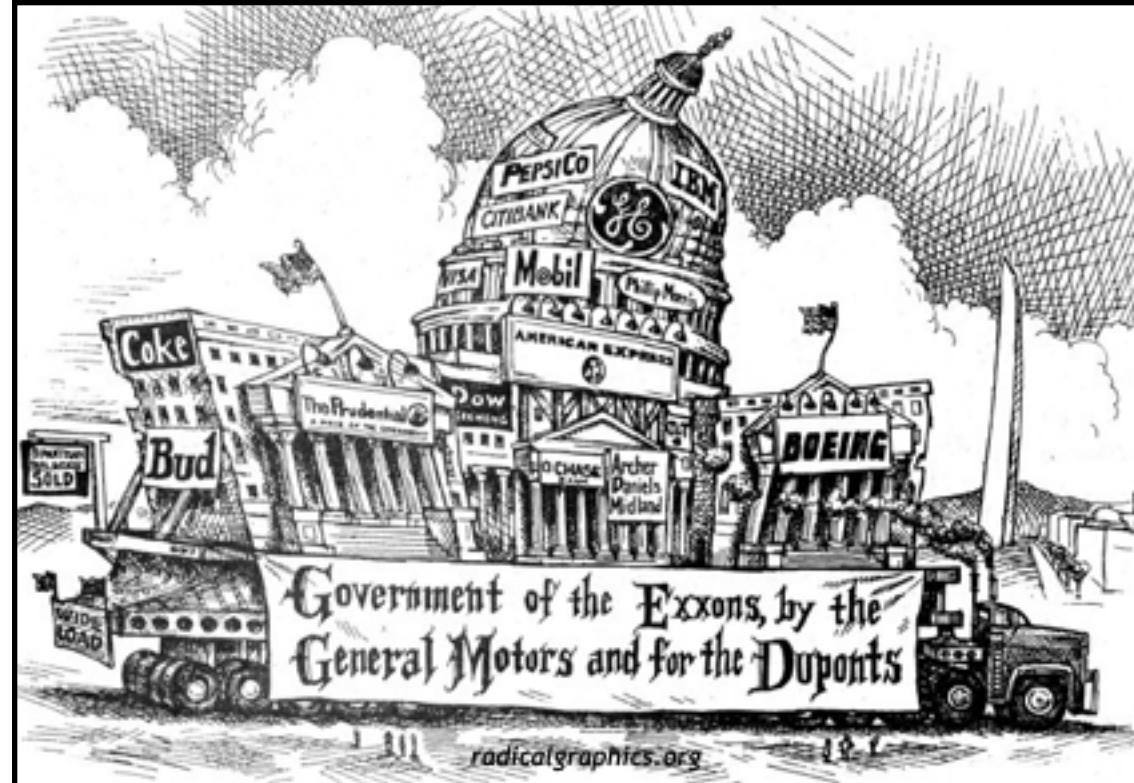
One of the comments I found most moving came from a reader who said I "should stop complaining and support the efforts to find Osama bin Laden." Well, never let it be said that I'm not doing my part to help find old Osama! For anyone wishing to dig up the facts and unearth the truth about Osama, so to speak, I will personally provide a shovel and a map showing the shortest route to Tora Bora. I believe that is the best approach to take and I make no bones about it (though actually, come to think of it, there could possibly be a few bones about it).

One of the strangest complaints came from a lady who said "people around the world aren't going to stop thinking the U.S. government is lying about 9/11 until people like you stop talking about 9/11 conspiracies." Actually, it seems to me people around the world aren't going to stop thinking the U.S. government is lying about 9/11 until the U.S. government stops lying about 9/11.

In response to another lady who asked whether I "can't find at least something positive to say" about the Kean/Zelikow Report on 9/11, I'm afraid the answer is "no." As a contribution to the historical record, the report is useless since it is a fraudulent document from the first page to the last. And even if we look upon the report as a work of fiction, it has very little value since it is poorly written and has none of the charm or creativity found in classic works of fantasy such as *Alice in Wonderland* or in the more recent series of "Harry Potter" novels.

One reader wondered how U.S. intelligence officials "could have been so stupid" as to choose "that tubby guy" to impersonate the reed-thin Osama bin Laden in the notorious "Jalalabad confession tape" and how the public and media "could have been so gullible" as to believe the tape was authentic. Well, I really don't know, but I think what might have happened is that somebody in one of the 16 U.S. intelligence agencies phoned central casting and said: "Send us an actor who looks like Osama." Apparently the fellow at central casting must not have been listening very carefully and thought the caller had said: "Send us an actor who looks like Santa."

As for why so many people believed the transparently fraudulent tape was



authentic, it must be remembered that in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 the public had been whipped into such a frenzy of fear and hysteria that most people readily swallowed practically any "anti-terrorist" propaganda they were fed. At that point, had the U.S. authorities released a videotape showing Bugs Bunny wearing a turban and white robes, and claimed it was Osama bin Laden, many people would probably have believed them - though perhaps a few might have wondered whether Osama really had such long ears and liked munching on carrots!

One rather worried gentleman said that since he fears that since I now have a number of articles on 9/11 posted on the internet, I might be on the U.S. intelligence services' "watch list." He asked whether I am concerned about this and whether I "understand what this means." Frankly, I'm not the slightest bit concerned about possibly being on the "watch list" and, as for "what this means," I'm hoping it means that one of the American intelligence agencies is going to be sending me a new watch.

One reader thought I painted too dark a picture of international politics and said B.C. and Canadian politicians "are just as sleazy" as those at the international level. Actually, however, I beg to differ. While I certainly wouldn't want to defend the ethical standards of some of this country's politicians - the serial duplicity of Gordon Campbell, for example, or the fear-and-smear tactics of Stephen Harper - the fact remains that B.C. and Canadian politicians are minor leaguers, or perhaps even little leaguers, compared to the Machiavellian wheeler-dealers on the world stage.

Politics is all about money and power and there is simply a lot more of both at stake at the international level. What the Great Fraud of 9/11 was basically about was determining who would get control of hundreds of billions of dollars worth of oil and gas in the Middle East and Central Asia, and whether additional hundreds of billions of dollars in the U.S. budget would be channelled toward military spending or non-military spending.

Looking at the overall reaction to my articles, what I find most encouraging is the fact that so many people are now coming to realize that the best way to truly honor the memory of all those who died in the United States on 9/11, and later in Iraq and Afghanistan as a result of 9/11, is not by willingly

swallowing a pack of official lies but by demanding that we be told the truth about what really happened that terrible day.

Public opinion on 9/11 has shifted significantly over the past couple of years, especially in the United States. Initially the overwhelming majority of Americans scoffed at any suggestion that George W. Bush or Dick Cheney might be personally implicated in the events of September 11th, 2001. But now a poll conducted by Zogby International has found that slightly more than half of Americans want a congressional investigation into the actions of Bush and Cheney in connection with 9/11. The shift in public opinion has taken time and that is entirely understandable. The lies of 9/11 were so powerfully and deeply implanted into the minds of Americans that it is extremely difficult for many people to dislodge them.

But more and more people in the U.S. and Canada are no longer blindly accepting the official propaganda and mythology about 9/11. They are finally insisting on examining the evidence for themselves and they are discovering that this evidence clearly indicates that the events of September 11th, 2001, were orchestrated, not from Afghanistan, but from Washington, D.C. It has become increasingly obvious that the Canadian government should never have sent a single soldier to fight in the phony, U.S.-manufactured war in Afghanistan. That bogus war was not worth the expenditure of one cent from the Canadian treasury or, much more importantly, the shedding of even one drop of the precious blood of Canadian soldiers or Afghan civilians.

Victoria Street Newz and other alternative media should be very proud of the role they are playing in exposing the official lies and deceptions about the 9/11 "attacks" and the "continuing search" for the long-dead Osama bin Laden. They are following in the finest tradition of the great iconoclastic American editor H.L. Mencken who once famously declared that the primary responsibility of a journalist is "to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable."

Gordon Pollard, who is a native of Victoria, has a MA in History from Columbia University in New York City and a BA in History and English from the University of Victoria. After working for 10 years as a journalist in B.C., Alberta, and Ontario, Gordon spent 20 years teaching English and History in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka.

Dancing on the Edge

Hey we are dancing on the edge my friend
we live within the creation and destruction
My heroes have died
My children are sick
My trees are living
My garden is bloomin in perma-culture.

Ah, my Bell hooks, my Alice walker
my earthwalkers. whose hands of beauty
are restoring the Earth
Your urban gardeners
Your daring New Markets
Your Gaia lovers
Your turthseekers
those great and lesser deceivers.
Gore's model is swarthy
Brilliant scientists disagree.
Somer elders are rigid
they don't realize that rattlin around in those large brains
possibilities abound
like the first snowdrops of spring.
When the energy falls
into the heart of emptiness
fullnes abounds and love blooms
as the higher dimension
infiltrates
thru the heart not the brain
and our consciousness expands
as we embrace our deep sameness
and we come together as One

Solange

Letters

Dear Janine,

In December's Street Newz you make the proclamation you're not a journalist!

You neglected to say what you are - a successful, very general manager of alternative press.

Heartfelt congratulations, and best wishes to you, the vendors, and all concerned.

Connie, Victoria

My name is Larry Wilkinson. Perhaps you remember me - you published two pieces of my writing in the Street Newz.

The beginning of a new year is a time of introspection for me, a time to reflect upon where I've been and where I'm going. I feel it is very important that I thank you for the interest you took not only in me, but in your continuing support of independent media and social justice. That someone as noble as yourself would publish a story about the darkest time in my life allowed me to put those horrors in my past and begin living for today.

I am grateful beyond words. My life today bears no resemblance to the life I lived even a few years ago. I continue to educate myself (still purchasing your paper every month) and am continually amazed by what is possible when even one person chooses to become the change they wish to see in the world.

Again, thank you.



Race Rats

The rats came out during the great garbage strike of 1978
increased and multiplied as food spills into the streets from mounds of refuse piled over the tops of sidewalk bins and dumpsters
White rats are few, the grays most viable
creeping furtive along curbs venturing out of the park to experience new delicacies
Little brothers of the beaver,
the second largest rat on earth
rural cousin and country bumpkin
but nevertheless a survivor
living through traps and bears to build dams and repair the streams
clearcut to the banks
Whites are in caged at UBC and hospitals kept and fed to provide stacked evidence of disease and man's inhumanity or running amazed and futile exercise wheels in parody of their organization masters subject of deficiency experiments designed by traptor minds taught with electric shock and exported cattle-prod democracy
Dark rats deal the dreams as white rats steal the screens to sell us back our garbage and burn us down if we fail to buy the fall of all to advertised lies
Real rats have no need of race or grace or face or mace or creed.

Jim Erkiletian



sway

the right to exist has ceased.
if you're outside, you're way f@#ked
and way outside. gotta
watch for the lights, the cops
choppers, and suddenly
dogs. awful cruel, that
pitting one servant
against another...
well, we keep it cool down here
out of the rain
on to the beer
and absent from God's sway.
loaves and fishes....i don't know
it's more like
shards of rotten veg
and the rusted bottoms
of tossed
tin cans.....

j. fisher

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Pete Rockwell photos

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A message from Earl:
Due to back problems, I will
not be able to sell the papers. I will
would like to thank the people I
meet connected to Street Newz.
Also, to thank my loyal
customers for their support, who I call my friends. I will
miss you all. God Bless, Earl.

May money from
the sale of this
newspaper
be used for
peace,
and pass through
healing hands.

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A Big Huge THANK YOU to all of you who
support us in your many diverse ways ...
best wishes from all of us for a
Peaceful and Socially Just 2010 !!

	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Street Newz Revenue				
Paper Sales (from previous month)	322.00	424.50	318.50	415.00
Donations	300.00	500.00	350.00	500.00
Gifts (incl in-kind)	100.00	100.00	120.00	100.00
Coordinator's Contribution	351.30	320.40	346.97	245.85
Subscriptions	150.00	135.00	140.00	100.00
Bread & Roses Donation to SNZ	1000.00	1000.00	1000.00	1000.00
Total Street Newz Revenue	2363.30	2608.90	2255.37	2420.85
Street Newz Expenses				
Salaries	1000.00	1000.00	1000.00	1000.00
Paper & Printing Costs	545.15	549.15	540.15	540.75
Vendor Meeting	0.00	3.00	40.00	40.00
Office expenses/website	150.00	144.45	0.00	20.00
Postage	74.65	81.20	76.22	80.13
Tot Street Newz Expenses	1723.80	1744.90	1865.37	1880.85
Street Newz	630.00	755.00	590.00	760.00
Bread & Roses Revenue				
Grants	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Bread & Roses Revenue	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Bread & Roses Expenses				
Bus Tickets (2 for 1)	40.50	40.50	40.50	40.50
Street Newz Donation	1000.00	1000.00	1000.00	1000.00
Tot Bread & Roses Expenses	1040.50	1040.50	1040.50	1040.50
Bread & Roses	-1040.50	-1040.50	-1040.50	-1040.50
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